Explanation of "The Meaning of Taaghoot"

Of the Imaam and Mujaddid
Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhaab

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About the Book: Before you is a complete translation of a treatise written by Imaam Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhaab, **"*Ma'anaa at-Taaghoot*"**, with an explanation by Dr. Muhammad bin 'Abdir-Rahmaan Al-Khumayyis. The treatise, along with its explanation, was printed in a larger book: "*Jam'-ul-Funoon fee Sharh Jumlati Mutoon Li''Aqaa'id Ahlis-Sunnah 'alal-Madhaahib-il-Arba'ah*" [A Compilation of Explanations of Treatises on the Creed of Ahlus-Sunnah according to the Four Madh-habs] by Daar Ilaaf Publishers. The treatise was then printed as a separate booklet in order to spread the benefit and facilitate the knowledge for the readers. This treatise is one of the several treasures the great Imaam and Mujaddid, Muhammad bin 'Abdil-Wahhaab, left behind. Although short in size, it provides a comprehensive breakdown of the subject at hand, which is the meaning of Taaghoot and a clarification of its principle figures.

What adds to the benefit, is the concise explanation provided by Muhammad bin 'Abdir Rahmaan Al-Khumayyis, which brings to light key points of the treatise. He also adds a summary and several test questions at the end of each section, in order to facilitate the study of the material for the readers and students.

Section 1

Mankinds First Obligation

Know, may Allaah have mercy on you, that the first thing Allaah obligated on the Son of Aadam is to reject the Taaghoot and believe in Allaah. The proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"And We have indeed sent to every nation a messenger (saying to his people): 'Worship Allaah alone and avoid the Taaghoot (false deities)." [Surah An-Nahl: 36]

{Explanation}

Language:

Farada (obligated) mandated; *Taaghoot* is derived from the verb *taghaa* (to transgress), and it means everything that has passed and transgressed its limit.

Explanation:

The Shaikh, may Allaah have mercy on him, began his treatise by clarifying the first thing that Allaah has obligated upon mankind, which is derived from the Book of Allaah, the Most High.

This obligation is: Rejecting the Taaghoot and Believing in Allaah, as Allaah says:

"And We have indeed sent to every nation a messenger (saying to his people): 'Worship Allaah alone and avoid the Taaghoot (false deities)." [Surah An-Nahl: 36]

So the first thing is Rejecting and Disbelieving in the Taaghoot, which is: Everything that is worshipped besides Allaah while being pleased with this worship. This includes removing every (false) god that is worshipped besides Allaah, such as a tree, a stone, the sun, the moon, an angel, a human and so on and so forth. These things have no right to be worshipped besides Allaah, because they do not have any command over the affairs (of the Universe).

Then after that comes making one's Religion sincerely for Allaah alone, worshipping only Him, and affirming His right to that apart from all others. This obligation – which is Disbelieving in the Taaghoot and Believing in Allaah – is the reality of what is meant by *Laa Ilaaha IllaaAllaah* (There is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Allaah), for indeed it is a negation and an affirmation. *Laa Ilaaha* (There is no deity that has the right to be worshipped) is a negation of those other than Allaah having the right to be worshipped. This is Disbelieving in the Taaghoot. And *IllaaAllaah* (Except Allaah) is an affirmation that Allaah is the only one that has the right to be worshipped.

By this, the first obligation mandated upon the servant becomes clear. And it is not intellectual insight or anything else, as some of the (deviant) groups of Rhetoric and others claim. It is that which has just been mentioned: Disbelieving in the Taaghoot and Believing in Allaah.

Summary:

1. The first obligation on the servant is: Disbelieving in the Taaghoot and Believing in Allaah.

2. Taaghoot means everything that is worshipped besides Allaah, while being pleased with this worship.

3. Some deviant groups from the People of Rhetoric claim that intellectual insight is the first obligation upon the sane adult.

Examination:

1. What is the first obligation on mankind? State the proof for it.

2. What is the meaning of the word Taaghoot?

3. Explain the reality of the meaning of *Laa Ilaaha IllaaAllaah*, and what does it mean when it is said it is a negation and an affirmation.

4. Who disagrees concerning the first obligation upon the sane adult, and what is their belief?

Section Two:

The Meaning of Rejecting the Taaghoot and Believing in Allaah

As for the description of **Rejecting the Taaghoot**, then it is that you believe in the futility of worshipping other than Allaah, and that you abandon doing so and hate it, and that you reject and make enmity with does who do it. And as for the meaning of **Believing in Allaah**, then it is that you believe that Allaah is the only true God who deserves to be worshipped alone, apart from everything else besides Him. And it is that you make all types of worship – every act - sincerely for Allaah alone, while negating and rejecting that from everything else that is worshipped besides Him. It also entails that you love and show friendship to the people of *Ikhlaas* (i.e. Islaam), while hating and showing enmity to the people of Shirk. This is the Religion of Ibraaheem, of which those who turn away from it only fool themselves. And this is the good example that Allaah informs us of in His saying:

"There has indeed been an excellent example for you in Ibraaheem and those with him, when they said to their people: 'Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allaah. We have rejected you and there has commenced between us and you, enmity and hatred forever, until you believe in Allaah alone.'" [Surah Al- Mumtahanah: 4]

{Explanation}

Language:

safiha (fools oneself) means he neglects and wrongs himself; *uswah* (example) rolemodel; *badaa* (commenced) to appear.

Explanation:

As for the description of **Rejecting and Disbelieving in the Taaghoot**, then it is that a person believes in the falsehood of worshipping other than Allaah, as Allaah says: **"And that what they supplicate to besides Allaah is false."** [Surah Al-Hajj: 62] And it is that a person abandons and leaves off this worship, not going near it, and so he doesn't mix anything into his worship of Allaah. And it is that he hates and loathes disbelief and the worship of Taaghoot, as Allaah says:

"And if you disbelieve, then indeed Allaah is not in need of you. And He is not pleased with disbelief for His servants." [Surah Az-Zumar: 7]

This includes that he holds its people to be upon disbelief, making enmity with them. So he doesn't ally with them nor does he show love for them nor does he support them.

The meaning of Believing in Allaah is that a person believes that Allaah is the only God, the One that is worshipped, the only One that has the right to be worshipped apart from all others. So there is no one that has the right to be worshipped besides Him, as Allaah says:

"That is because Allaah, He is the truth." [Surah Al-Hajj: 62]

Likewise, he makes all types of worship sincerely for Allaah alone, such as prayer, fasting, Zakaat, Hajj, supplication, swearing oaths, reliance, hoping, fearing and so on. So he negates these from everything that is worshipped besides Allaah and makes them solely and purely for Allaah alone, as He says:

"Say: It is Allaah whom I worship sincerely, to Him belongs my religion (i.e. worship)." [Surah Az-Zumar: 14]

So it is not permissible to direct any part of this worship to something other than Allaah, and if he fails to abide by this then it is Shirk.

What falls under "Believing in Allaah" is having love for the people who worship Him sincerely and the adherents of Tawheed, as well as befriending them by loving them, assisting them and showing affection to them. It also includes hating their opponents from the people of Shirk, disassociating with them and not seeking allegiance with them, as the Prophet (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

"The firmest grasp of Eemaan (Faith) is loving for the sake of Allaah and hating for the sake of Allaah." {Reported by At-Tabaraanee in *Al-Kabeer* (11/215), Al-Baghawee in *Sharh-us-Sunnah* (13/53). Ahmad (4/286) reported similar to it and Al-Albaanee authenticated it in *As-Saheehah* (no. 998) based on supporting evidences.}

What has just been explained right now is the religion of Ibraaheem, peace be on him, about which Allaah said:

"And who is it that turns away from the religion of Ibraaheem except one who fools (wrongs) himself." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 130]

Allaah has clarified the stance that Ibraaheem and those believers that followed him took against their disbelieving people, so He said, ascertaining that this is the example that we are obligated to follow and abide by:

"There has indeed been an excellent example for you in Ibraaheem and those with him, when they said to their people: 'Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allaah. We have rejected you and there has commenced between us and you, enmity and hatred forever, until you believe in Allaah alone.'" [Surah Al-Mumtahanah: 4]

So they absolved themselves from them and rejected them and whatever they were worshipping besides Allaah. And they declared to them their enmity and hatred and their cutting off of love for them, until they make their worship purely for Allaah alone, single Him out apart from others and remove all of the false gods from Him.

Summary:

1. A description of Rejecting the Taaghoot is: Believing that it is false and futile to worship it, as well as holding its believers (i.e. in Taaghoot) to be disbelievers and disassociating from them.

2. From Believing in Allaah is making one's worship sincerely for Him alone, loving the people of Eemaan (Faith) and associating with them.

3. These two fundaments make the foundation of Ibraaheem's Religion.

Examination:

1. What is the foundation of the religion of Ibraaheem?

2. Discuss briefly the description of Disbelieving in the Taaghoot.

3. Is there any connection between having Faith in Allaah and loving and befriending the people of Eemaan (Faith)?

Section Three:

The Meaning of Taaghoot and the Heads of its Categories

The word Taaghoot is general. So everything that is worshipped besides Allaah, while being pleased with this worship – whether it is something worshipped, someone followed, or someone obeyed in the absence of obedience to Allaah and His Messenger, then that is considered Taaghoot. The Tawaagheet (pl. of Taaghoot) are many, but their heads are five:

The First: The Devil who calls the people to worship other than Allaah. The proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"Did I not command you O children of Aadam, that you should not worship the Devil. Verily, he is a plain enemy to you." [Surah YaaSeen: 60]

The Second: The tyrannical and oppressive ruler who changes Allaah's rulings. The proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"Have you not seen those (hypocrites) who claim to have faith in that which has been revealed to you, and that which was revealed before you, and they wish to go for judgement (in their disputes) to the Taaghoot, when they have been ordered to reject them? But the Devil wishes to lead them far astray." [Surah An-Nisaa: 60]

The Third: The one who judges by other than what Allaah has revealed, and the proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"And whoever does not judge by what Allaah has revealed, then they are the disbelievers." [Surah Al-Maa'idah: 44]

The Fourth: The one who claims to have knowledge of the Unseen, apart from Allaah. The proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"He alone is the All-Knower of the Unseen, and He does not disclose His Unseen matters to anyone. Except to a messenger whom He has chosen, and then He makes a band of watching guards (angels) to march before him and behind him." [Surah Al-Jinn: 26-27]

And He says: **"And with Him lie the keys to the Unseen, no one knows them but He. And He knows whatever there is in the land and in the sea; not a leaf falls except that He knows about it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but that it is written in a Clear Record."** [Surah Al-Ana'aam: 59]

The Fifth: The one who is worshipped apart from Allaah, while being pleased with being worshipped. The proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"And whoever amongst them says: 'Verily, I am a God besides Him (Allaah)', then this person's recompense will be the Hellfire. That is the way We recompense the wrongdoers." [Surah Al- Anbiyaa: 29]

{Explanation}

Explanation:

The author, may Allaah have mercy on him, indicates that the word Taaghoot is a term that consists of specified types. Therefore it is general and not specific to one particular individual or being. In fact everything that is worshiped besides Allaah, or followed besides Allaah, or obeyed in matters that are disobedience to Allaah and His Messenger, while being pleased with this worship, obedience and following, then that is Taaghoot. The Tawaagheet (pl. of Taaghoot) that have been described with these characteristics are many, because their characteristics, as we mentioned just now, are general and are not particular to one specific thing. However, the greatest of these (various) types (of Taaghoot) are five, and they are the heads of Taaghoot.

First: The Devil: He is the greatest of those who call towards the worship of other than Allaah. And he is pleased when someone other than Allaah is worshipped, since he calls the people to that, as Allaah says:

"Did I not command you O children of Aadam, that you should not worship the Devil. Verily, he is a plain enemy to you." [Surah YaaSeen: 60]

So the Qur'aan clearly states that they worshipped the devil. And this was because they obeyed him apart from Allaah, and followed him (in what he called to).

Second: The second of the heads of the five Tawaagheet is: The oppressive ruler that changes and replaces the law of Allaah, as was done by the Jews. This is done either because one seeks to belittle Allaah's Laws, or because he prefers some other law system over Allaah's Laws, or because the Devil has gained mastery over that ruler that has changed and replaced the Laws of Allaah. What provides evidence for this category is the following noble ayah:

"Have you not seen those (hypocrites) who claim to have faith in that which has been revealed to you, and that which was revealed before you, and they wish to go for judgement (in their disputes) to the Taaghoot, when they have been ordered to reject them? But the Devil wishes to lead them far astray." [Surah An- Nisaa: 60]

So Allaah has described their stating that they have Faith as only a claim (on their part), thus rejecting it and holding them to be liars. This is because they sought judgement from other than Allaah, turning away from Allaah's Law. This was after they were commanded to not seek judgement from it, by having been commanded to disbelieve in and reject the Taaghoot. But the Devil overpowered them and led them astray from Allaah's path.

This is the third category from the heads of Taaghoot – every oppressive ruler that changes the Law of Allaah, replacing it for something else.

Third: The third category from the heads of Taaghoot, is the one that rules by other than what Allaah revealed, as Allaah says:

"And whoever does not judge by what Allaah has revealed, then they are the disbelievers." [Surah Al-Maa'idah: 44]

This is the same whether it is a judge or a king or a president or so on. So whoever rules by other than what Allaah revealed, implementing it knowingly, then he is a Taaghoot, even if he claims what he may claim. And indeed Allaah has declared him a disbeliever. However some of the Salaf would not declare the one who ruled by other than what Allaah revealed in issues such as kinship or bribery and so on to be disbelievers. This was even though, fundamentally, he would rule by what Allaah revealed and judge the people according to that. So he wouldn't rule by other than Allaah's laws absolutely (i.e. only on some issues).

Fourth: The fourth category from the five heads of Taaghoot is the one who claims to have knowledge of the Unseen, apart from Allaah. This is since Allaah is the only one who has knowledge of the Unseen, apart from His creation, as He says:

"He alone is the All-Knower of the Unseen, and He does not disclose His Unseen matters to anyone. Except to a messenger whom He has chosen, and then He makes a band of watching guards (angels) to march before him and behind him." [Surah Al-Jinn: 26-27]

And He says:

"And with Him lie the keys to the Unseen, no one knows them but He. And He knows whatever there is in the land and in the sea; not a leaf falls except that He knows about it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but that it is written in a Clear Record." [Surah Al-Ana'aam: 59]

So Allaah alone is characterized with Knowledge of the Unseen. No one else has the ability to know it except with His permission. The creation does not know anything of the knowledge of the Unseen about what will occur in the future. So whoever claims knowledge of the Unseen for himself or for others, then he has disbelieved in Allaah, the Most High and ascribed partners to Him in that which only He has the right over (i.e. knowledge of the Unseen).

Fifth: The fifth and final head from the heads of Taaghoot is that which is worshipped besides Allaah, while being pleased with that. Many categories can be gathered below this one. The proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"And whoever amongst them says: 'Verily, I am a God besides Him (Allaah)', then this person's recompense will be the Hellfire. That is the way We recompense the wrongdoers." [Surah Al-Anbiyaa: 29]

So this is the judgement of Allaah upon that Taaghoot, that called others to worship himself and placed himself as a god besides Allaah, as was done by Pharaoh, may the curse of Allaah be on him, and as was done by others. So these are the five heads that have been mentioned as being from the most principal heads of the categories of Taaghoot. There are other types of Taaghoot that have not been mentioned here.

Summary:

1. Taaghoot is everything that is worshipped and obeyed besides Allaah, while being pleased with that.

2. The types of Taaghoot are many, but the most important of them are the five types that have been mentioned in this treatise.

Examination:

1. Is the meaning of the word Taaghoot specific or general?

2. What are the most important heads of Taaghoot?

3. What is the proof that the Devil is one of the heads of Taaghoot?

4. What is the ruling on one who claims to know the Unseen? State your proof.

Section Four:

Disbelieving in the Taaghoot is a Condition for the Correctness of Faith

And know that man will never become a believer in Allaah unless he rejects and disbelieves in the Taaghoot. The proof for this is Allaah's saying:

"There is no compulsion in the Religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path. So whoever disbelieves in the Taaghoot and believes in Allaah, then he has taken hold of the firmest handhold that will never break. And Allaah is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 256]

The **"right path"** here refers to the Religion of Muhammad (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), while the **"wrong path"** refers to the Religion of Abu Jahl. The **"firmest handhold"** refers to the testimony that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allaah {***Laa Ilaaha Illallaah***). This testimony consists of a negation and an affirmation. It negates all types of worship from those worshipped besides Allaah, while affirming all types of worship done for Allaah alone, free from any partner.

{Explanation}

Language:

Istamsaka (taken hold of) being intense in holding onto something; *infisaam* (never break) rupture, separation; *ghayy* (wrong path) means deviation and misguidance.

Explanation:

One cannot have faith (Eemaan) in Allaah unless he firsts disbelieves in the Taaghoot. This is since Eemaan (Faith) and Shirk (polytheism) cannot be gathered together in one heart, for they are opposites. So one must remove all worship offered to other than Allaah first and then establish worship to Allaah alone afterward. Allaah says:

"There is no compulsion in the Religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path. So whoever disbelieves in the Taaghoot and believes in Allaah, then he has taken hold of the firmest handhold that will never break. And Allaah is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 256]

So Allaah began by mentioning "Disbelieving in the Taaghoot" first and then "Believing in Allaah" second, as a clarification and confirmation for what He stated. ***Rushd*** (guidance, i.e. the right path) here means the religion of Muhammad, the religion of Tawheed, singling Allaah alone out for worship, and making the Religion purely for Him. ***Ghayy*** (misguidance, i.e. the wrong path) here means the religion of Abu Jahl, ascribing partners with Allaah, directing worship to other than Allaah, and taking rivals besides Allaah.

Al-'Urwat-ul-Wuthqaa (the firmest handhold) here means the testimony that there is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Allaah (***Laa Ilaaha IllaaAllaah***), which is a negation and an affirmation. *Laa Ilaaha* negates that anyone besides Allaah has the right to receive any form of worship, for indeed they are not deserving of it and they do not have any control over the affairs. *IllaaAllaah* is an affirmation because Allaah is deserving of all forms of worship, with their various types. This is because He is the only One that is characterized with creating, ownership and administering (of affairs). So therefore, He has the right of all the different forms of worship, apart from others.

Summary:

1. Disbelieving in the Taaghoot is a condition for the correctness of Faith.

2. *Rushd* (the right path) means Tawheed and *Ghayy* (the wrong path) means Shirk.

3. *Laa Ilaaha IllaaAllaah* consists of a negation and an affirmation.

Examination:

1. Which comes first: Disbelieving in the Taaghoot or Believing in Allaah?

2. Give the meanings of the following terms: (a) *Rushd,* (b) *Ghayy,* (c) *Al-'Urwat-ul- Wuthqaa*.

3. What does it mean when someone says *Laa Ilaaha IllaaAllaah* is a negation and an affirmation?